*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

March 1, 2023

Dear District Leader,

I hope this message finds you well, and that you are encouraged by school- and district-level data, as you are completing Mid-Year Progress Monitoring on your priorities. As communicated in my [December 22 e-mail](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fturnaround%2Flevel4%2F2022-1222ssos-important-dates.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) we are eager to follow-up with guidance for the district prioritization submission process for SY23-24.

As you know, all schools identified as ‘requiring assistance’ by the [MA Accountability System](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools/default.html) must develop improvement plans aligned to state and federal regulations. For the second consecutive year, the Statewide System of Support (SSoS) has developed guidance that is designed to align and consolidate district prioritization efforts with school-level sustainable improvement plan (SIP) reporting requirements. This year we are also taking steps to more clearly align this submission with your [Student Opportunity Act (SOA) plans](https://www.doe.mass.edu/soa/) and school and district [accountability targets](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools/default.html) (to be released soon), as well as DESE’s Educational Vision for supporting [Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/culturally-responsive/).

Once again, we ask that districts provide *one submission* capturing the district’s primary instructional priority(ies), which are designed to close equity and opportunity gaps, promote excellence, and ensure that all students, particularly students from historically underserved groups and communities, have equitable opportunities to excel. Guidance for the submission is provided below. **This priority will serve as the focus for SSoS and CSDP support to your district.**

On **Tuesday, April 4, from 3:30-4:30 p.m.**, we will host an **optional webinar** to discuss the submission requirements and highlight the shifts we made in response to what we learned last year.Please look out for an invitation with the webinar link. The webinar will be recorded and posted on our website shortly after.

As a reminder, the 10 schools designated as “underperforming” will also need to renew their SIP plans as per M.G.L. Chapter 69 1J. These school plans must align to the priorities outlined in the district’s submission. Please reference the [Sustainable Improvement Plan](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html) guidance for details. Both the district submissions and underperforming school renewal plans (if applicable) for the 2023-2024 school year should be submitted to DESE by **June 30, 2023** (**via email to** [**ssos1@mass.gov**](mailto:ssos1@mass.gov)**).** Your SSoS regional assistance team is available to support your development of these plans. Once submitted, SSoS will use regularly scheduled engagements to provide feedback and support revisions to your plan before the launch of next school year.

*We look forward to partnering with you on this important work.*

Sincerely,

SIGNED BY ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER CURRY

Charmie Curry, EdD

*Associate Commissioner, Statewide System of Support*

**Statewide System of Support (SSoS) District Prioritization Submission**

**Guidance for 2023-2024 School Year**

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| **Background & Purpose** |

The Statewide System of Support (SSoS) has developed [guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html) that is designed to align and consolidate district prioritization efforts with school-level planning and reporting requirements for schools identified as requiring assistance by the MA accountability system[[1]](#endnote-2). We ask that districts provide *one submission* capturing the district’s **1-2 top** **instructional priorities for SY2023-2024**, which are designed to close opportunity and equity gaps, promote excellence, and ensure that all students, particularly students from historically underserved groups and communities, have equitable opportunities to excel. **The priorities outlined in the submission will serve as the focus for SSoS and CSDP support in SY2023-2024.**

*Please note that the 10 schools identified as* [*Underperforming Schools*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/about.html) *as per M.G.L. Chapter 69 1J are still required to renew their plans by June 30, 2023, using the* [*Sustainable Improvement Planning guidance.*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html)

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| **Submission Guidance** |

***Submission Requirements:*** Addressing the components outlined below will not only support an evidence-based approach to school and district improvement planning, but it will also meet state and federal planning and reporting requirements for schools identified as requiring assistance.

***Submission Format:*** We encourage districts to use [this template](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/prioritization/submission-template.docx) to ensure all parts of the guidance are addressed. Districts may modify the template if doing so makes the submission more authentic and useful for your work.

***Due date:***  Please email your submission to [ssos1@mass.gov](mailto:ssos@mass.gov) by **Friday, June 30, 2023**. SSoS will then review your plan and use regularly scheduled engagements to provide feedback and support revisions before the launch of the school year.

***Tips & Reminders:***

* **The 1-2 priorities outlined in this submission should be a subset of a larger multi-year district strategic plan,** for example, a district’s 3-year [SOA plan](https://www.doe.mass.edu/soa/), and/or plans developed for ESSER, Title I, or similar strategic efforts.
  + District submissions should not describe all the priorities and strategies that the district may be engaged in. This guidance is intentionally designed to focus on **1-2 high leverage priorities** that will have a meaningful impact on educator practice and student learning across the district.
  + We anticipate that most, if not all, SSoS districts will maintain the same priorities next year, and will refine implementation and systems based on what you are learning this year. ***We are not recommending that SSoS Districts select new priorities for next year.***

Districts are encouraged to leverage the protocols used in the [Instructional Prioritization Institute](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/guidebook/pinstitute.html) when developing these submissions. For your convenience, we have added footnotes to highlight protocols that are particularly relevant for specific sections of the submission.

* We realize that this type of meaningful district planning must be carefully considered, collaborative, and iterative. The information you submit by June 30th does not need to be perfectly constructed or set in stone. In fact, we expect that before we launch support toward your priorities for SY23-24 in late summer, districts will refine and strengthen key components of the submission, including but not limited to the priority, and monitoring, implementation sections.
* Stakeholder engagement is a crucial part of plan development. We expect that all plans will demonstrate how the district has responded to input from students, families, teachers, and school leaders particularly those in schools identified for targeted assistance.

***Support Before & After Submission:*** Your SSoS regional assistance team is available to support this process and help you strategically refine key components of your submission, including how the district will support implementation and monitoring. Following your submission, your regional assistance team will provide feedback to strengthen your plan and will use the information to inform our work as we support your work throughout the coming year. Once again, the submission will act as the “north star” for our Office’s support to your district.

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| **Information to be Addressed in Submission** |

1. **Priority(ies): What are your district’s top 1-2 instructional priorities for SY23-24?[[2]](#endnote-3)** What are the meaningful changes in educator practice that are the focus of this priority? What will be the meaningful changes students will experience in their learning because of this focus? Which specific equity and opportunity gaps will this priority address?
   * These priorities and related outcomes should align to DESE’s Educational Vision for Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices. Specific equity and opportunity gaps should align to your [SOA plan](https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiZWNiZjcyMTgtZjhmYS00YzJiLWI1MWQtMzhhYmM4NmJlZDU0IiwidCI6IjNlODYxZDE2LTQ4YjctNGEwZS05ODA2LThjMDRkODFiN2IyYSJ9).
   * At least one priority should be focused on strengthening culturally and linguistically sustaining grade appropriate instruction, but others could be related to topics such as the adoption of high-quality instructional materials, strengthening the learning environment and students’ sense of belonging, or creating and sustaining school or district instructional leadership teams, or another priority for which you would like to receive assistance from SSoS next year.
   * For each priority, please respond to the remaining prompts below:
2. **Analysis of Strengths and Challenges:** What data led you to identify or recommit to this priority? What are the underlying systemic factors that contribute to the findings in your data analysis? *Ensure your findings represent:*
   * Data from each of the following four areas described in the [CSDP Coherence Guidebook](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csdp/guidebook/default.html): student outcomes, instruction, stakeholder perspectives (e.g., [VOCAL](https://www.doe.mass.edu/research/vocal/default.html?section=) or other student experience data), and systems/structures.
   * Themes from both aggregate and student level analysis, including themes from looking at student work.
   * Data for specific student groups that point to specific equity gaps in the district.
   * Insights gained from using this [Data Equity Pause Protocol](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/prioritization/1-data-equity-pause-protocol.docx) to consider differences in how specific students or student populations experience instruction.
3. **Stakeholder Engagement:** How did input from students, families, educators, and community stakeholders inform this this priority and the design of this plan? What input did you get from stakeholders in schools identified as requiring assistance? How will stakeholders be continuously engaged in implementation and monitoring?
4. **Outcomes:** Which specific [Accountability](https://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools/default.html) targets (coming soon) will be met as a result of focusing on this priority? (In the aggregate and for specific student groups). In addition to accountability targets, are there other data points (e.g. from your analysis of strengths and challenges in step 2) that would be helpful to track for signs of progress with this priority?
5. **Role Clarity:** What is your strategy to ensure that all stakeholders understand their role in implementing this priority?[[3]](#endnote-4) At a minimum, please describe:
   * What the district’s central office will do consistently to support school leaders;
   * What school leaders will do consistently to support teacher practice; and
   * What teachers will do consistently to support student learning and achieving the desired outcomes.
6. **Monitoring Implementation:** What interim benchmarks will you track throughout the year at both the district and school level to gauge changes in adult practice and student learning/experiences?[[4]](#endnote-5) Who will monitor these and how often?
   * Consider referencing the [SOA implementation Indicators](https://www.doe.mass.edu/soa/implementation-indicators.docx) in your [SOA plan](https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiZWNiZjcyMTgtZjhmYS00YzJiLWI1MWQtMzhhYmM4NmJlZDU0IiwidCI6IjNlODYxZDE2LTQ4YjctNGEwZS05ODA2LThjMDRkODFiN2IyYSJ9) to identify high-leverage benchmarks
   * Share how student assignments and work samples will be analyzed at the district, school, and classroom level
   * **Less is more**: Ensure you have identified a just a few high-leverage benchmarks that will provide the most focus and information for the identified priority(ies).
7. **Resources:** What partnerships, programs, or resources will you leverage to implement this priority?  These could include external resources (e.g., supports offered by DESE or other partners) as well as internal resources (e.g., staffing, funding from TAG, ESSER, M3 etc.) Briefly describe how the implementation of the plan will address any inequities discovered during the district’s review of local district and school budgeting data, as required by ESSA.[[5]](#endnote-6)
8. **Differentiation:** How will the district differentiate assistance for schools identified by the Accountability system as requiring assistance, and for other schools that need more support with this priority? Please list the schools that will receive differentiated support and briefly describe what that differentiated support will entail.

1. In SY2023-24 SSoS is providing targeted assistance to schools and districts identified by the following criteria: schools in the lowest 10th percentile; schools with a federal designation; and schools designated as underperforming as per MGL Chapter 69 1J. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. [Instructional Priority Protocol](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/prioritization/2-instructional-priority.docx) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. [Vertical Alignment Strategy Protocol](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/prioritization/3-vertical-alignment-strategy.docx) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. [Street-Level Data Protocol](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/prioritization/5-street-level-data.docx) (Shane Safir & Jamila Dugan) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. See the [District Systems portion of the Sustainable Improvement Planning guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html?section=district#accordion). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)